



Fortune Mdluli with fellow course workers at Congressional Country Club.

DIGEST
AWAY GAME

BIG BREAK FOR ZULU GREENKEEPER

FORTUNE MDLULI is a young South African greenkeeper who has benefitted from an amazing opportunity to work on the course staff at top golf clubs in the United States. He got his break this year with a six-month internship at Congressional CC in Washington, DC, and is now working at the Sea Pines resort in South Carolina.

Fortune, from Bergville in the KZN Drakensberg region, owes his progress as a greenkeeper to an organisation called Future Farmers (futurefarmersfoundation.com), which helps train disadvantaged young people from impoverished communities to become

farmers, horticulturalists or greenkeepers. “We take on people who have passion, but usually have neither money nor good school marks,” says Judy Stuart, founder of Future Farmers. “It is rewarding work. Kids who left school and had no opportunities are now managing commercial farming operations. One is managing a large dairy in Tasmania.”

Fortune, 25, started as an apprentice course worker at Gowrie Farm in the KZN Midlands, before moving to Prince’s Grant on the North Coast. After four years, with the help of Guy Smith and Dale Hayes, he was sent overseas to Congressional, which has two pre-eminent South African staff members,



CEO Mike Leemhuis and course superintendent Dave Hutchinson.

“Fortune has been so impressive in his work ethics and the way he integrated with their staff that Congressional are keen to mentor more apprentices from South Africa,” said Stuart. “However, money is keeping us from getting local golf clubs to take on and fund apprentices, as they need to pay them R1 500 a month. However, there is a new government incentive which will enable employers

to claim back R1 000 a month for two years as a tax rebate on these youngsters.

“Fortune has been remarkable. He saved up to attend courses at CPUT (Cape Peninsula University of Technology), travelling there by train during his leave. He has shown us what can be done with attitude and work ethic. He has become an icon to the rural community where he grew up in the Bergville district. When he returns, he will hopefully mentor and guide other young people.”